



PSSB Weekly Highlights

- Rhonda Sullivan, 9-1-1 Program Assistant Manager, and Ryan Olson, Third Signal Public Safety Consultant, will speak on wireless cost recovery and call taking for dispatchers at next week's Montana APCO conference in Kalispell. In addition, Wing Spooner, Special Projects Coordinator, will outline updates and changes to the 2011 *Montana Mutual Aid and Common Frequencies Manual*.
- The National Fire Protection Association's (NFPA) annual public awareness campaign, Fire Prevention Week (FPW), begins October 9. This year's theme is focused on educating families about what causes home fires, how to prevent them, and what to do in an emergency situation. Visit www.firepreventionweek.org for helpful tools and resources.

State Agency Radio Users Receive Updates

Scott Bradford, PSSB, briefed State Agency Radio Users Task Force members on progress being made on the Interoperability Montana (IM) dissolution and transition at their meeting on Tues. Sept. 27 in Helena. He also gave an update on narrowband transmission FCC license renewals.

Members were updated on the Radio Map Overlay Project that Jens Bolstad, Disaster and Emergency Services, is overseeing. The purpose of the project is to allow responders to quickly identify radio communication resources during a disaster. Participants discussed such issues as quality assurance, availability and confidentiality of the information.

Julia Noland, PSSB, recently participated in a conference call about the Remedy Ticketing System. This cloud-based software provides service-center functions and would dovetail with alerting and monitoring needs of the statewide radio system. The Remedy system allows for the implementation of a Configuration Management Database, which is an industry standard for maintaining a repository of elements of an information system. The database maintains an accurate inventory and up-to-date information on the performance and attributes of every

element of the statewide radio system, including test equipment, spares, levels of hardware, software and firmware and repair history to name a few. End users could use the system to report problems, while technicians could use it to maintain repair history.

Task Force Chair Mike Stapp, DES, reported on several upcoming training opportunities (see related article) and said that an Auxiliary Communications Course for amateur radio operators is soon to be scheduled. He also reported that Montana's Military Auxiliary Radio System (MARS) is up and running. This Dept. of Defense-sponsored program uses licensed amateur radio operators to provide adjunct emergency communications on a local, national and international basis. Mike provided an overview of the Montana Repeater Link Association (MRLA) (<http://www.wr7mt.org/>). He urged members to encourage locals to get involved in amateur radio so this resource can be used as an effective communications back up during emergencies.

Agency updates were given, and plans were reaffirmed to hold a strategy session to identify priority issues and action plans at the group's next meeting on Tues., Oct. 25. It will take place in room 160 of the Mitchell Building, 125 N. Roberts, in Helena.

Upcoming Technical Training Opportunities

Save the date for one of two All-Hazards *Communications Technician* (COMT) training sessions: either Oct. 17-21, 2011 or Feb. 13-17, 2012. Offered for the first time in Montana, this course trains emergency responders on practices and procedures common to radio communication technicians during emergency operations. The COMT class will help communications technicians work within the Incident Command System (ICS) organizational structure. It is intended for federal, state, local, and tribal emergency response professionals as well as coordination/support personnel with communications backgrounds.

The 32-hour-long Communications Unit Leader (COML) training is returning to Montana on Jan. 9-12, 2012. This session trains participants on how to coordinate on-scene emergency communications during a multi-jurisdictional response. Both courses are sponsored by the Office of Emergency Communications (OEC) and will take place at the Armed Forces Reserve Center at Fort Harrison.

For more information, contact Michael Stapp, Montana Disaster & Emergency Services, by e-mailing mstapp@mt.gov or calling 406-324-4786. To learn about course objectives and prerequisites, visit: <http://www.safecomprogram.gov/currentprojects/Default.aspx>.

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Enrollment is limited.

ICS 300 and ICS 400 courses, which are prerequisites for COMT and COML, have been scheduled for Wed.-Thurs., Nov. 2-3 from 8 to 5 each day and Wed.-Thurs., Nov. 16-17 from 8 to 5 both days. Both classes also will be taught at Fort Harrison. Contact David Vaught at dvaught@mt.gov or 406-444-0354 for more information.

Highwood Baldy Combiner Installed

Last Wed., Sept. 28, radio technicians from the Montana Highway Patrol (MHP), FBI, Customs & Border Protection (CBP), Montana Dept. of Transportation, BLM, U.S. Forest Service (USFS) and U.S. Air Force converged on the Highwood Baldy radio site to install a combiner. The combiner couples local, state and federal frequencies to a single antenna. It was purchased to keep the tower from being over loaded with a number of separate antennas.

In addition to assembling racks for the combiner and radios, two antennas were installed on the tower, adding to the two transmit antennas CBP technicians hung earlier in the week. The tower now has one master receive antenna and several master transmit antennas.



Highwood Baldy site technicians featured from left to right are Bruce Brown, FBI; Mike Kaufman, MHP; and Mark Olsen, MHP.

On Thurs., Sept. 29, technicians moved the USFS microwave to the new building along with radios from each agency. In addition, a technician from a local radio shop moved Chouteau County's three repeaters. A final trip was made to the site the next day to correct some technical issues and finalize the project.

According to Dale Osborne, MHP, "Great teamwork was needed to accomplish all of this work. Dave Green, MDoT, contributed to our productivity and sense of camaraderie by serving all of us hot dogs and potato salad at the site on Wed. Many thanks, Dave!"

One Narrowband Requirement – Many Options for Assistance

By Scott Bradford sbradford@mt.gov

Heard Across Montana is committed to distributing regular and accurate reminders regarding the Jan. 2013 narrowbanding mandate for spectrum below 512 MHz. This important requirement has many public safety agencies initiating modifications to equipment and Federal Communications Commission (FCC) licenses. Often, folks in the Public Safety Services Bureau (PSSB) are asked: "Where can I get assistance to meet this deadline?" or "I received this official looking letter in the mail about narrowbanding and potential penalties, what should I do?"

A number of sources are available for assistance. PSSB remains committed to helping local, tribal and state agencies walk through the narrowbanding relicensing process. To date, dozens of agencies have had PSSB help them, and it anticipates providing continued assistance in the months to come.

If you are making administrative changes to your FCC license (updating contact information or making other minor adjustments) or you are simply wanting to narrowband your frequencies (20k to 11k with no change to the last three emission designators on your license), any public safety agency can do this online at the FCC website -- AT NO COST! Other sources of help include local radio shops or consultants that have supported local agencies for years. These companies can assist you, but it is likely they will charge a fee for their time. National frequency coordinators, such as Association of Public Safety Communications Officials (APCO) and Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO), can also assist agencies with narrowband license modifications for a fee.

Additional sources of assistance are available, but these often come with higher price tags. Many FCC license holders may regularly receive marketing letters or e-mail announcements from national frequency companies. Often these arrive on officious looking paperwork and are marked with bold "Your Immediate Attention is Required," "Important," or "Accounts Payable" stamps. The correspondence may warn of FCC fines for violations of land-mobile radio policies and caution you that your radio frequency license will be automatically terminated. Their offers are to complete all the documentation to fulfill your FCC obligations. These firms can be a source for changing frequencies to narrowband emissions or for making other modifications, but, again, there are fees associated with using their services.

However an agency decides to proceed, it is essential not to let your licenses expire and to narrowband your frequencies before the Jan. 1, 2013 deadline. However, public safety agencies need to

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consider all options that are available to help accomplish the same goal.

The no-cost, self-service option for public safety entities involves simply visiting the FCC website at: <http://wireless.fcc.gov/uls/index.htm?job=home>, and entering your license modifications or renewals yourself. A second option is to contact PSSB staffers Scott Bradford at sbradford@mt.gov or Julia Noland jnoland@mt.gov for free assistance with converting FCC licenses to cover narrowband requirements.

OEC Provides Case Studies

The ability of public safety officials to effectively communicate is essential to saving lives and property. Over the last ten years, significant progress has been made to improve emergency communications capabilities. Since its inception in 2007, the DHS Office of Emergency Communications (OEC) has worked to share best practices and other important information with public safety responders.

OEC has just published five case studies addressing each lane of the SAFECOM Interoperability Continuum's success factors, as follows:

- **Governance:** The New York City Interagency Communications Committee is an example of how jurisdictions are managing a regional committee working within a multi-state framework.
- **Standard Operating Procedures:** The Minnesota Allied Radio Matrix for Emergency Response (ARMER) serves as a model for achieving interoperability through response procedures and protocols that are designed prior to an incident.
- **Technology:** The Delaware Statewide Emergency Communications System is a case of a standards-based, regionally-shared system that supports more than 14,000 subscribers from 247 different local, state, federal and non-governmental agencies.
- **Training and Exercises:** This study examines the Washington State Integrated Interoperable Communications Plan, which was developed in preparation for the 2010 Olympic Games. This interagency communications plan was adapted into a two-day curriculum that enables students to apply new communications skills through a series of tabletop exercises.
- **Usage:** Louisiana Wireless Information Network (LWIN), developed as part of the recovery efforts of Hurricane Katrina, is an example of a multi-jurisdictional system that provided vital support to responders during responses to Hurricane Gustav and the Deepwater Horizon oil spill.

For more information or to request a PDF copy of the case studies, contact OEC@dhs.gov.

Upcoming Meetings

- **Tues., Oct. 11: Regional Broadband Meeting**
In partnership with: Lake County Community Development; 407 Main Street SW
Ronan • 1:00-5:00 pm
- **Wed., Oct. 12: Regional Broadband Meeting**
In partnership with: Bitterroot Economic Development District; Hilton Garden Inn, 3720 North Reserve St.
Missoula • 10:00 am - 2:00 pm
For more info.: <http://broadband.mt.gov/events.aspx>
- **Wed-Thurs., Oct. 12-13: MT Chapter APCO Conference**
Kalispell • Red Lion Inn, 20 N. Main St.
Call 1-800-RED-LION (1-800-733-5466) or visit www.REDLION.com for reservations.
<http://www.mtapco.org/>
- **Mon. -Thurs., Oct. 17-20: Communications Technician (COMT) Training**
Fort Harrison • 8:00 am - 5:00 pm daily
Regional Training Institute (RTI) Rm. 12; Contact: Michael Stapp, mstapp@mt.gov or 406-324-4786
- **Mon., Oct. 24: Regional Broadband Meeting**
In partnership with: Montana Business Assistance Connection;
Red Lion Colonial Hotel, 2301 Colonial Drive
Helena • 10:00 am - 2:00 pm
- **Tues., Oct. 25: Regional Broadband Meeting**
In partnership with: Bear Paw Development Corporation;
Hensler Auditorium-MSU Northern
Havre • 10:00 am - 2:00 pm
- **Wed., Oct. 26: Regional Broadband Meeting**
In partnership with: Snowy Mountain Development Corporation;
Yogo Inn, 211 East Main Street
Lewistown • 1:00 - 5:00 pm
- **Thurs., Oct. 27: Regional Broadband Meeting**
In partnership with: Beartooth Resource Conservation & Development Area
Granite Tower, 222 North 32nd St.
Billings • 10:00 am - 2:00 pm
For more info.: <http://broadband.mt.gov/events.aspx>



**State offices will
be closed on Mon.,
Oct. 10, to
commemorate
Columbus Day.**